

IV. THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

CIORAN AND GNOSTICISM

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ABSTRACT. This study presents Cioran's relation with Gnosticism that is marked by the fragmentary and contradictory style of Romanian thinker. This is caused by the specific ambivalence signalled by the Romanian essayist, ambivalence that is affirmed by the vitalist standpoint, and negated by the nihilist standpoint. The theoretical contradiction is a repercussion of Cioran's way of approaching to the essence of life marked by the irrational and to the knowledge that is both, at the same time, a privilege and a hex. Therefore, from the nihilist point of view, that of an apologist of decomposition and desperation, Cioran can rightfully be associated with Gnosticism. On the other hand, many of his ideas describe, at the same time, an Agnostic outline. From the vitalist and fervent point of view, Cioran is represented as a strong enemy of gnosis. When he defames existence and history, he can be considered a Gnostic, and when we take into account the fervour for our world delusion and appearances, he is situated at the opposite pole of Gnosticism.

Keywords: Gnosticism, creation, demigod, knowledge, nihilism.

Many of Cioran's exegetes consider him an exponent of Gnosticism. Moreover, Gnostic ideas and several references to the Gnostic representatives, and their doctrines, are to be found in excerpts of his work. That is why, even if halfway, such labelling can be considered legitimate. This happens because of the specific ambivalence signalled by the Romanian essayist, ambivalence that is affirmed by the vitalist standpoint, and negated by the nihilist standpoint. This situation is similar in the case of other religious forms, to which the thinker adheres, in his fragmentary, paradoxical and contradictory style. But, first and foremost, this very principle of antagonistic determination may be a Gnostic one. This instance is similar to the one depicted in a Romanian folk legend that

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showcases Gnostic features, often mentioned by Blaga, “Fârtate și Nefârtate”¹, in this particular case what the former ties together and builds, the latter unties and does backwards. In a similar fashion, Cioran situates himself in a place where he pays tribute to Gnosticism and is in an ultimate contradiction with it.

I. Therefore, from the nihilist point of view, that of an apologist of decomposition and desperation, Cioran can rightfully be associated with Gnosticism. The thinker himself has stated in *The Trouble With Being Born* that “when you get in touch with the extreme truths of the Gnostics, you would like to go, if possible, even further, and utter something that has not been uttered before, something that solidifies, or turns history into dust; something that belongs to a cosmic Neronism, to a insanity at the material level”².

In spite of the particularities belonging to different Gnostic systems, generally speaking, and without any exhaustive expectations, Gnosticism is characterized by the faith in two Gods: a good one, creator of the souls and of the spiritual world, unfamiliar and unknown to the ones belonging to our world, and the demiurge as an embodiment of evil and incompetence (in Marcion’s case identified with the God of the Old Testament). The latter is the creator of our material world and of the bodies in it, an inferior world that is evil and incomplete. The creation of the material world is an accident that occurred in the world of the spirits, or a consequence to the fight between the two exponential principles, good and evil (e.g. Manichaeism). History becomes a representation of the exile from the world of the spirits, and it is placed under the providence of the demiurge. Consequently, the man is permanently possessed by a feeling of estrangement. Only true knowledge (gnosis) can help the man overcome the ignorance that surrounds him, in the form of bodily imprisonment, and reach his own salvation. As a specific example, in the Valentinian gnosis, deliverance could be reached if one knew where the souls were, in their original state, what became of them, what world they belong to, respectively what was the meaning of birth and rebirth. Knowledge has a redeeming effect and discovers: the origin of the World, of Evil, of Christ’s drama, of the One embodied, and is meant to send forth and save the people, and bring God’s victory, that leads to the end of History and the destruction of the Universe. The true nature of man is spiritual, is of divine origin, but it’s incarcerated in the body. Initially, he used to dwell in the divine world, but later was thrown into the material world. The creation of the actual world is a

¹ Blaga, Lucian, „Fârtate și nefârtate”, Manuscript, from the series of essays entitled: *Minciunile lui Dumnezeu*, v. *Isvoade. Eseuri, Conferințe, Articole*, edition by Dorli Blaga and Petre Nicolau, preface by George Gană (București: Minerva, 1972), 208-210.

² Emil Cioran, *Despre neajunsul de a te fi născut*, translation from French by Florin Sicoe, (București: Humanitas, 2006), 119.

“sinister tragedy”, and is the work of “a demiurge or a demonic Being, true embodiment of the Evil”. From this perspective, the birth represents a “fall into matter”, and “the rebirth”, a liberation from the material, and an elevation into the spiritual³.

The Gnostic perspective is aligned to Cioran’s theory of the evil demiurge, and the body of consequences stemming from it. In *The new gods*, the author considers existence in its entirety the work of “an evil god”, “without scruples”, “immoral”, “inferior”, “agitated”, “event instigator”, “miserable”, “cursed”⁴. The world is wicked from its very beginnings, a hypothesis that comes to contradict the Christian teachings, according to which, at the beginning of the world all things were very good. Cioran says that the Christian belief of the good God, *the Father* participant in the *scandal of creation*, is completely inadmissible. The good God is not the creator because on one hand, a world dominated by death, illness, suffering, cannot be created by a good divinity. Henceforth, for Cioran, the evil is not an absence of the good, as stated by the Holy Fathers, but an evidence that governs everything that is alive. Moreover, Cioran considers that the good God cannot participate at genesis, because the good is not able to create, due to anemia and lack of dynamism. Every creation has at its origin a satanic principle, because tension is reflected only by evil, by its action, contradiction, and fertility, while the good represents calmness, anemia and inactivity. In *Cioran, l’hérétique*, the exegetes Patrice Bollon observes that the author of *The new gods*, speaks about the aspiration of our souls towards heavens. With Cioran, and implicitly with Gnosticism, the good God shows indifference towards this world, history, as a whole, being placed under „the eye of the Evil”⁵.

Cioran appreciates Marcion the heretic, who in order to protect the good God against the responsibility of the existence of evil, denies his attributes as creator and providence. As we know, according to Marcion’s teachings, the creator of this world is the God of the Old Testament, who is not evil, but imperfect, inferior. The evil is caused by the matter in which dwells the principle of evil. This demiurge, is neither omniscient nor powerful⁶, and transmits his imperfections to the world and its creations. The world created by

³ Mircea Eliade, *Istoria credințelor și ideilor religioase*, vol. II (Chișinău: Universitas, 1992), 359-363.

⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Demiurgul cel rău*, translation from French by Irina Bădescu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997), 8-9.

⁵ Patrice Bollon, *Cioran, l’hérétique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 193.

⁶ “Marcion extracts his arguments against God the creator from the Old Testament, submitting him to a rational hermeneutics. The first thing that draws his attention is the *loci* of the divine ignorance (Gen. 3, 9, 11) As long as God asks the first man to hide in Paradise: ‘Adam, where are you?’, it means that he is not omniscient”. I. P. Cuianu, *Gnozele dualiste ale Occidentului. Istorie și mituri*, trans. by Tereza Cuianu-Petrescu (Bucharest: Polirom, 2002), 177.

this good divinity is immaterial and inaccessible for us⁷. Cioran agrees with Marcion's hypothesis, mentioning that the latter explains our world's imperfection without getting in contradiction with the goodness of God. Marcion, observes Cioran, refuses the dogmas of the Church, by placing creation and history under the sign of evil, but „defends God's honour”⁸. After all, from what Cioran wrote to Wolfgang Kraus on January 2nd 1980, we can see that the teaching of the heretic Marcion, „the most interesting figure of gnosis”, „was the nucleus that gave birth the *evil Demiurge*...”⁹.

Cioran's theory about the evil Demiurge pays tribute to Gnosticism, and to his philosophical heritage, chiefly Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. In the “The Mischance of Being Born”, Marta Petreu underlines Schopenhauer's influence upon Cioran's philosophical thinking. The critic notices that in *The World as Will and Representation*, the man and the world are “something that they shouldn't be”, made not “by God but by the Devil”, and likewise, with Cioran, “the world was not made by the good God, the Father”, but ‘the evil God’¹⁰. We can also mention that Nietzsche himself – as presented in *On the Genealogy of Morality* – from early childhood associated evil with God, considering him “the father of evil”. “The problem regarding the origins of evil – states Nietzsche – followed me since I was a thirteen year old boy: at an age when your heart is torn between childhood games and God, and it is to God that I dedicated my first childish literary activity, my first philosophical writing practice – and with regards to my ‘solving’ of the problem back then, well, I deemed appropriate to grant God the honor of considering him *the father of evil*”¹¹.

Getting back to Cioran's relationship with Gnosticism, we notice that the scholar made reference to the doctrine in his *Notebooks*, where he writes that, like Marcion, he believes that the demiurge is not first and foremost evil, but “incompetent”¹². In his *Notebooks* Cioran also states that the man is brought into being by “the devil's spit”¹³. The idea leads us, this time around, to the doctrine of the Bogomils. According to I. P. Culianu¹⁴, in Bogomilism the devil creates the

⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁸ Emil Cioran, *Demiurgul cel rău*, translation from French by Irina Bădescu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997), 14.

⁹ Emil Cioran, *Scrisori către Wolfgang Kraus. 1971-1990*, translation from German, edition and notes by George Guțu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2009), 181.

¹⁰ Marta Petreu, „Ghinionul de-a te fi născut”, in *Ionescu în țara tatălui*, by Marta Petreu (Cluj-Napoca: Apostrof, 2001), 166.

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogia moralei*, in *Știința voioasă, Genealogia Moralei, Amurgul idolor*, translated by Liana Miclescu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994), 291.

¹² Emil Cioran, *Caiete I*, translation from French by Emanoil Marcu and Vlad Russo (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), 170.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴ Culianu, *Gnozele dualiste ale Occidentului*, 224.

snake out of his saliva, and Adam is animated, brought into being, by an off-putting sputum upon his soul. Cioran's affinity with Bogomilism is reflected in the proverb encountered in his *Notebooks*: "God is not without sin, since he created the world"¹⁵. In the same *Notebooks*, Cioran confesses that Ahriman stands for his principle and his God¹⁶. This time around he joins the Persian dualism, which, according to Blaga, represents one of the sources of Bogomilism¹⁷.

The element these Gnostic doctrines share is the presence of a temptation of the evil. Cioran underlines that both Marcion and the Manicheists represent the evil as an "attraction". They are "obsessed with horror, dreadfulness"¹⁸, ascribing the evil God the condition of an "increate", because without the evil, the world would seem empty. By obsessively showing interest in evil, Cioran becomes a Gnostic:

"As the ones that out of love for the Father, pondered too much upon the Opponent, they were to understand the eternal condemnation rather than the liberation"¹⁹.

Cioran's Gnosticism is also reflected in the essay about Joseph de Maistre, published in *Exercises of Admiration*. The sentiment of the exile, "the fact that everything is evil, because nothing is in its place"²⁰, or the idea of a providence that attributes a fatalistic level to the historical becoming²¹, are aspects that stir Cioran's admiration towards the French moralist. Cioran brakes away from Joseph de Maistre, when the latter backs up the surreal of the evil, which is an accident, an absence of a kind, when the latter states that the man is the responsible entity for the original Sin, and for the Fall²², and that the world is a creation of the good God. Or, for Cioran, the evil and the good share the same reality, if not a greater one. As in the case of a disease that is not a health absence but a durable reality, the evil is substantially existent. As in Manichaeism²³, he considers good and evil principles that dwell together, both

¹⁵ Emil Cioran, *Caiete II*, translation from French by Emanoil Marcu and Vlad Russo (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), 367.

¹⁶ Cioran, *Caiete I*, 26.

¹⁷ Blaga, „Fârtate și nefârtate”, 207.

¹⁸ Cioran, *Demiurgul cel rău*, 14.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁰ Emil Cioran, *Exerciții de admirație*, translation from French by Emanoil Marcu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997), 12.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

²² *Ibid.*, 24.

²³ It is known that in Manichaeism the two natures coexist: "The Father of All Greatness", symbolized through light, governing the northern territory and "The Prince of Darkness", represented by matter, and dominating the southern part. The two principles are conflictual, and our world is the result of this continuous struggle. See Mircea Eliade, *Istoria credințelor și ideilor religioase*, vol. II, 377.

at the level of eternity and that of evolution. The grotesque and the absurd, characterizing the historical events, can be explained rationally, by the presence of an evil principle. This aspect is the “one to blame” for the creation and the events developing in the evolution of history²⁴.

Another Gnostic aspect of Cioran’s work results from “the correlation”²⁵ established between the concepts of birth and error. In *The new gods*, creation as a whole, becomes a “embarrassing detail”, “an inutile episode, even ill-fated”²⁶. Being “a suspect”, procreation has to be “discouraged”²⁷. One major issue regarding the birth is the imminent implication it brings along, namely *the death*. The man is condemned to die, from his birth. Any birth fatally assumes suffering and death. That is why, God’s commandment to our forefathers as presented in Genesis – “Be fruitful and multiply” – is characterized by Cioran as a “criminal encouragement”²⁸. The philosopher is situated closer to the teachings of the Bogomils²⁹ and that of the Cathars, who condemned marriage: “To procreate means to love flagellation, to want to maintain it, and to multiply it”³⁰. Likewise, in *The Trouble With Being Born*, as suggested by the title, “the birth”, is “evil”³¹, “scandal”³² or “an outburst towards evil”³³, because nothing “material” is capable “to elevate”³⁴ the existence. The birth is a “chance”, an “accident”, but the “forgetfulness” that entails life gives the sensation that it is a capital event for the “equilibrium of the world”³⁵. The accident does not resume to the human beings, but becomes a general one. From this perspective, the philosopher reaches consensus with the Bogomils, and with the Thracians, the ones that wept the birth³⁶ on our lands. Also, Cioran resonates with the idea

²⁴ Cioran, *Exerciții de admirație*, 20-21.

²⁵ Emil Cioran, *Caiete III*, translation from French by Emanoil Marcu and Vlad Russo (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), 116.

²⁶ Cioran, *Demiurgul cel rău*, 13.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ “At the 1211 council against the Bogomils, the ones that sustained that the ‘woman breeds in her womb with Satan’s help, and that Satan dwells there from the beginning until the birth of the child’ were anathematized”. Although I don’t dare to imply that the Devil would show so much interest towards us as to accompany us months in a row; but I also could not doubt the fact that we have been procreated under his supervision and that he truly offered assistance to our beloved creators.” *Ibid.*, 90.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

³¹ Cioran, *Despre neajunsul de a de fi născut*, 6.

³² *Ibid.*, 23.

³³ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

presented in the Gospel of the Egyptians, where Jesus affirms that he came to “kill the fruit of a woman”³⁷, because as long as the women will give birth, people will be victims of death.

Cioran’s attitude places him in concordance with Marcion’s doctrine according to which no one can escape the evil of creation. For Marchion – states I. P. Culianu – man’s creation is the most abominable act of genesis, because it is shaped in accordance with the image of the demiurge, from a “lapsed substance” that makes him a “servant of procreation”, namely a servant of the flesh. That is why, he believes that procreation cannot find justification, whether it is “practiced freely”, or inside this “brassy trade (*negotium impudicitiae*) that is marriage”³⁸. The only possibility to avoid evil is “the restraint pushed all the way to Encratism”³⁹. Tertulian, in defense of marriage, criticizes them, and accuses them of “letting themselves die (*apocarteresis*) in order to show despise towards the Creator”⁴⁰.

The human condition described by Cioran also shows obvious affinities with Gnosticism. The man, as he enters life, feels *estranged*, *exiled*, and constantly carries with him *the nostalgia of the unborn*. Or, these particularities carry a strong Gnostic mark. The man, considers Cioran, can only imagine life before birth as “a sleep without beginning”, and “everlasting”⁴¹, and can regret the original inactivity.

“Not to be born [...]. The nostalgia of the previous infinity is nothing but the regret that a condition was interrupted [...] the one in which the non-manifestation was voluptuous, and dismayed by the immanence of the being”⁴².

Nostalgia is accompanied by the ideal of the not-born, by the desire to return to the original condition. In this sense, Cioran confesses in his *Notebooks*:

“I don’t despise life, I don’t long for death, I only wish I hadn’t been born. I prefer the re-birth to life and death”⁴³.

The Gnostic particularities of Cioran’s thinking are a result of his positioning as a defamer of the world and of history, instances of the magic eye of the evil. In his *Lectures*, Cioran draws a comparison between Christianity and Gnosticism. Christianity, even if at first tempted by eternity, and inclined towards surrender, gradually betrays eternity and enters the realm of history.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

³⁸ Culianu, *Gnozele dualiste ale Occidentului*, 184.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Cioran, *Caiete III*, 196.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 194.

He will see in the evil doings of history liberating tryouts. Closest to Cioran's ideas are the ones of Gnosticism where the evil is in relationship with time:

"For the Gnostics everything that is associated with time originates in evil. [...] The loss of recognition expands upon history as a whole, as a means of belonging to a sphere of false realities. It doesn't make sense, and it shows no utility. The passing through history is not fructified"⁴⁴.

Similarly, for the philosopher, time is a "disease of eternity", and history "a disease of time"⁴⁵. The devil is "an emissary of the god" who is meant to "set order" in the "world below", respectively in history⁴⁶. All the insufficiencies and the shortcomings, present in history, are "assigned" to him.

In *Cioran ou le Dernier Homme*, Sylvie Jaudeau brings to light his Gnosticism. The idea of creation as "decay"⁴⁷, also that of the human evil as a result of the divine "mistake"⁴⁸, of the "evil demiurge"⁴⁹, the one of "the refusal of procreation"⁵⁰, and the one referring to the feeling of "estrangement in the world"⁵¹, testify that Cioran is a "dignified perpetuator"⁵² of the Gnostic spirit. Likewise, Beatrice Bollon appreciates in *Cioran, l'hérétique* that the scholar can be associated both with the Buddhist and Gnostic way of thinking⁵³. The co-participation of the two opposing forces to the process of creation, perceive creation as a "mistake", and history as "an ontological exile". P. Bollon places Cioran among "the great Gnostic Alexandrian scholars of the 2nd century, such as Valentinus and Basilides"⁵⁴. Even if he doesn't want "to label" him as a Gnostic, William Kluback shows, at his turn, some similarities between Cioran's ideas and those "of the great Gnostic scholars, like Valentinus, Basilides, Carpocrate"⁵⁵. William Kluback transforms Cioran's conception on the issue of evil into a logical, standardized language, observing that "Evolution is [...] the source of corruption", of evil. But also, "Creation is the origin of Evolution".

⁴⁴ Cioran, *Convorbiri cu Cioran* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004), 217.

⁴⁵ Cioran, *Caiete III*, 186.

⁴⁶ Cioran, *Demiurgul cel rău*, 10.

⁴⁷ Sylvie Jaudeau, *Cioran ou le Dernier Homme* (Paris: José Corti, 1990), 50.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 59

⁵² *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵³ Bollon, *Cioran, l'hérétique*, 191.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 192-193.

⁵⁵ William Kluback & Michael Finkenthal, *Ispitele lui Cioran*, translation and notes by Adina Arvatu, C. D. Ionescu and Mihnea Moise, Bucharest, Ed. Univers, 1999, 170.

Therefore, the evil exists from genesis, is a “constitutive”⁵⁶ part of existence, and is “co-substantial with human nature”⁵⁷. This is the reason why—considers the critic- in Cioran’s work, the man cannot find “caressing” in “God’s goodness, but in the evil god- master of Evolution and contributor to the misfortunes and the vanity of our world”⁵⁸.

II. Having in mind the specificity of Cioran’s thinking, impossible to associate with one conception, we are compelled to admit that many of his ideas describe, at the same time, an Agnostic outline. From the vitalist and fervent point of view, Cioran is represented as a strong enemy of gnosis. With Cioran the world is cursed and adored at the same time. Therefore, when he defames existence and history, he can be considered a Gnostic, and when we take into account the fervor for our world of deceit, he is situated at the opposite pole of Gnosticism.

This fervent approach is presented at his best in his early writings, when his vitality is at its peak. Here, the moment is risen, by the intense feeling, to the rank of eternity. Although torn by the shadows of decay, brought by evolution, the young Cioran does not deny *this* world. He believes in the world situated down below, the world of disappointment, of ephemera, a world that can get a meaning either by revolting or living fully. Even when he negates existence, the principle he goes by is still in connection with the assertion of our world of disbelief, but in a negative way.

The shortcomings and the curse brought by knowledge, according to Cioran, belong to a principle that is in contradiction with the Gnostic teachings. S. Jaudeau notices that Cioran opposes the Gnostic idea, according to which salvation is reached through knowledge, and is often opting for its absence⁵⁹. In this direction, Cioran propagates *the awakening from knowledge*⁶⁰, while the Gnostic stimulates the *awakening from ignorance*. We notice that with Cioran we experience, initially, a metaphysical ideal that eliminates the illusion, the awakening from ignorance, but once one gets the chance to taste the fruit of knowledge, also aspires towards the original unconsciousness. The reasoning behind this Agnostic final attitude is related to the sense of essential revelation. If the Gnostic discovers the eternity of the soul and its divine origin behind the material illusion, Cioran discovers behind this illusion only eternity and the infinity of nothingness. In Gnosticism the immanent hides the transcendental, the Being, while with Cioran, behind the immanent hides death, the Non-Being.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁵⁹ Jaudeau, *Cioran ou le Dernier Homme*, 50.

⁶⁰ Emil Cioran, *Amurgul gândurilor* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998), 132.

That is why, for the philosopher, “to know everything” is ultimately followed by “not knowing where to”⁶¹. Even so, in the case of this radical opposition, there is a Gnostic that will sustain it. Basiliades, as believed by Cioran, has the great merit to observe a fundamental truth: salvation can be achieved through ignorance. If mankind wants salvation, it should have as a purpose getting back to the original “ignorance”⁶². Together with Basilides, Cioran believes that a man’s duty is to abandon knowledge. Knowing things is often connected with ones desire. But many of the things we desire are not in our power, or are incompatible with our nature. And since suffering is a result of a unsatisfied desire, the only way one can remove it is by giving up knowledge⁶³.

From the above mentioned we can illustrate another distinction: Gnosticism offers soteriology through the access to true knowledge, while Cioran resigns in front of the irreparable impossibility to bring salvation. Marcionism is an example in this sense. Therefore, despite the practiced nihilism, Marcion believes in the salvation brought by Christ. With Marcion, Judgment Day means installing the kingdom of the new Father, of the good God who shows forgiveness and is a stranger at the same time. The righteous ones will pass into the eternal life of the angels, and the sinful ones will be given to the demiurge, and will die together with him and the world he created by a universal combustion⁶⁴. Cioran is incapable to adhere to such ideas that require an act of faith. If in Gnosticism death can be understood as salvation, because it helps us brake away from the imprisonment of the body, and the soul can return to the superior universe, according to Cioran, neither life nor death offer a solution.

As long as the evidence of evil is taken into account, Cioran bears the same tonality the Gnostics do, but when an existence that exceeds evidence is postulated, as placed into transcendental with the help of faith, the two standpoints differ radically. But, the main difference between Cioran and Gnosticism does not refer only to the life *after* death, but also to the life *before* death. If for Gnosticism paradise is equivalent to the world of the spirits, for Cioran paradise is identified with the non-being⁶⁵ (this is when knowledge is radically rejected), and with ignorance (this is when knowledge is limited and disguised). In other words, for Cioran the paradise represents an absolute and relative absence of knowledge and conscience.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁶² Cioran, *Demiurgul cel rău*, 140.

⁶³ Emil Cioran, *Caietul de la Talamanca*, translation by Emanoil Marcu (Bucharest, Ed. Humanitas, 2000), 16.

⁶⁴ Culianu, *Gnozele dualiste ale Occidentului*, 186.

⁶⁵ “In paradise, things and beings [...] are deprived from reality”. Cioran, *Despre neajunsul de a te fi născut*, 188.

The discrepancy between the two visions is also a result of taking into consideration the nature of the spirit. For the Gnostics, the spirit, the main component of the human being, was imprisoned in the body at the time of the fall. According to Cioran the spirit (the equivalent of conscience) is not an essence, but an accident that descends upon the organs because of the disease. Because of the pain, the body reaches its conscience. Furthermore, the spirit or the conscience, as defined by Cioran, dies with the body, while in Gnosticism the spirit is eternal.

To all these aspects we can add the fact that Cioran is not interested in the distinctions and doctrine divisions, such as those referring to the number of angels, or the classifications of the skies. In this direction, Simona Modreanu underlines that Cioran sometimes establishes an identity rapport between the demiurge and the devil, other times he makes a distinction between the two. For Cioran – states the critic- cosmogony is never triadic (God, Demiurge, Devil), as it is for Gnostics like Ptolemy and Marcion (Cioran claims to be his exponent sometimes), but it operates either with the God-Devil opposition, or the God- the evil Demiurge one⁶⁶. Cioran summarizes only the nihilist Gnostic ideas that can give expressions to his obsessions and agonies. From this perspective, I.P. Culiănu places Cioran among the existentialists, and considers that they share with Gnosticism themes like: “abandonment”, “forgetfulness”, “lack of authenticity”⁶⁷. Their ties stop here, because each conception chooses a different direction. If Gnosticism, starting from this negative condition, hopes for a salvation through the relationship with the transcendental, Existentialism conceives the purpose of the being as “being – for – death”. This is the reason why, Existentialism, and implicitly Cioran’s point of view, represent “the reverse of Gnosticism”. Cioran, as considered by the critic, is affiliated with Gnosticism, because he stresses the question “what origin does the evil have?”, and because of the answer he provides: the evil Demiurge.

Moreover, at a closer look, we observe that the answer given does not reflect that strong affinity, because Cioran always has in mind the *idea* of divinity, and not its existence. The essayist sums up the idea of an evil demiurge as a rational answer to the existence of evil.

In this sense, in one of his *Lectures*, Cioran says that for him the divinity is merely a “concept”, even if pertaining to a “limit”. This “limit concept” is the only one that can satisfy the scholar’s strive for absolute. God is a “fictive existence”, a “unsubstantial point”⁶⁸ that receives from us different names, and

⁶⁶ Simona Modreanu, *Cioran* (Iași: Junimea, 2005), 59.

⁶⁷ Culiănu, *Gnozele dualiste ale Occidentului*, 327.

⁶⁸ Cioran, *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, 216.

is an exceptional partner of discussion, when the individual reaches the extreme limit of solitude. This is an “inner content” of ours, “[our] maximum point” that will help us overcome “futility” , and life’s lack of sense. This kind of a concept, fiction or idea, without a correspondent in reality, is the evil demiurge. Cioran himself confesses in his *Notebooks* his disbelief in this evil god, mainly during the time he was writing the text about “the evil demiurge” (July 1964): “I would like to write about this god as if I believe in him – although I don’t”⁶⁹. Even so, the philosopher believes that he “needs *him*”. Even if an illusion, Cioran accepts him because he makes his life possible. That is why in a lecture Cioran confessed:

“I must admit that I’ve spent a lot of time on the image of this evil God, only because such a vision about the history of the world can ease things. You get to understand and explain everything with its help”⁷⁰.

Therefore Cioran depicts a difference between *the existence of divinity* and the *idea, or the concept of the existence of divinity*. This procedure is used by the scholar when he makes the difference between the suicidal act and the idea of suicide. The idea that we have the possibility to take away our life can give us the illusion that we are the masters of life, and that we can decide upon the moment death should occur. Life becomes more bearable when we realize that it is also in our power to decide the moment of the great ending. Therefore, the philosopher affirms in *All Gall Is Divided*: “I am still alive because it is in my power to die when I choose to: without the idea of suicide, I would have forever killed myself”⁷¹, and in his *lectures* he confesses: “if the idea of suicide didn’t exist, I would have killed myself for sure”⁷². Therefore, if for being able to live we need the idea of suicide, and not the suicide, similarly we need the idea of the existence of divinity, and not necessarily its real existence. Cioran stops upon the idea/the concept (the psychological level), and does not extract, according to the ontological argument, the existence of divinity. His purpose is not to demonstrate the existence of divinity, but to make his own life more bearable.

“Whatever you do, after you’ve lost your own support, you can only find another In God. And if one can still breathe without him, without his *idea*, you would lose yourself in the chasms of the mind”⁷³.

⁶⁹ Cioran, *Caiete I*, 263.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 123-124.

⁷¹ Emil Cioran, *Silogisme amărăciunii*, translation from French by Nicolae Bârna (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1992), 57.

⁷² Cioran, *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, 173, 207.

⁷³ Cioran, *Amurgul gândurilor*, 63.

The demiurge is presented as a concept, an idea that solves the problem of the evil. Another idea, that does not have, a correspondent in reality, explaining partially the life and history, is that of the original sin.

“Without the idea of the original sin, the stupefaction would be the only feeling in front of everything that is happening. This idea is a principle that explains the universal value that allows us to understand all the miseries that overwhelm us especially the ones that are connected to being a man”⁷⁴.

Having as a starting point such premises of Cioran’s philosophy, Culianu concludes that Cioran is a “knight of nihilism”⁷⁵, situated at the “antipode of gnosis”, the only common thing shared with this conception being the negative attitude in front of the world. “The negative” is the only point where the two visions intersect. The same aspect is underlined by S. Jaudeau, when she affirms that with Cioran we have an “atheistic”⁷⁶ or “without God”⁷⁷ Gnosticism.

In conclusion, we can state that trying to capture Cioran in a certain category, well determined and final, such as the one of Gnosticism, is not completely possible, unless we shut one eye, and maintain a unilateral view upon the thoughts of the Romanian scholar. The same type of conflict is underlined by Marta Petreu in *About the Diseases of the Philosophers*, where she mentions the problem of faith in Cioran’s work:

“the problem of faith or lack of it with Cioran is a matter too complicated to be solved with a *yes* or a *no*”⁷⁸.

Therefore, more efficient would be an endeavor to find his place in a contradictory, but complete way, in order to get to the conclusion that he is, and at the same time isn’t, an exponent of Gnosticism. The conflict between the two perspectives finds a solution in the dialectics of life, where the elements that are contradictory, at the theoretical and logical level are organically merged.

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⁷⁴ Cioran, *Caiete III*, 194.

⁷⁵ Culianu, *Gnozele dualiste ale Occidentului*, 328.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 328.

⁷⁷ Jaudeau, *Cioran ou le Dernier Homme*, 54.

⁷⁸ Marta Petreu, *Despre bolile filosofilor. Cioran* (Cluj-Napoca: Biblioteca Apostrof, 2008), 65.

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